
FACT SHEET: THE 2020 CENSUS | LOCAL UPDATE OF CENSUS ADDRESSES (LUCA) PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the *decennial census*?

A: The U.S. Constitutionⁱ requires a count of the nation's population — or *census* — every ten years for the purpose of apportioning seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the 50 states. Responsibility for taking the census lies with Congress, which in turn has delegated authority to conduct the count to the U.S. Department of Commerce and its Census Bureau.ⁱⁱ A series of Supreme Court cases subsequently established that congressional districts must have roughly equal numbers of people (Fourteenth Amendment's equal representation clause), so census numbers also are used for drawing district lines (the redistricting process). Therefore, the census also collects data on race and ethnicity, as well as gender, age, and (except for group living facilities) whether a dwelling is owned or rented, a loose proxy for higher or lower income households. An ongoing longer census form, called the American Community Survey (ACS), produces annually updated information for all communities between each census.

Q: Why is a fair and accurate census important?

A: Census data are a vital tool for overcoming the nation's legacy of slavery, racism, and discrimination. The collection of accurate, comprehensive race and ethnicity data in the census is central to implementing, monitoring, and evaluating many civil rights laws and policies, from fair political representation and voting reforms, to equal opportunity and access across all economic and social sectors of society, including housing, education, health care, and the job market. The data provide evidence of disparate impact of governmental and private sector policies and practices, and assist civil and business leaders in devising solutions that promote equality of opportunity and address the needs of a diverse population.

Q: What is the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Operation?

A: Congress created the LUCA program in 1994 to facilitate state and local participation in building the all-important address list for each census.ⁱⁱⁱ LUCA gives tribal, state, and local governments the opportunity to review and update the Census Bureau's address list and digital maps for their areas, reflecting their knowledge of non-traditional and low visibility housing in their communities. Through LUCA, communities can help ensure that the census counts the residents of all housing units and puts them in the right place.

The 2020 Census LUCA program will run from January 2017, when the Census Bureau sends an **Advance Notice** to all eligible governments with information and instructions about participating, to June 2020. Additional phases of LUCA include:

- **Invitation** — Formal invitation package, with registration and procedural information, sent to all eligible governments. *July — September 2017*
- **Address Review** — Participating governments have 120 days after receiving their materials to submit their address and spatial updates, which can include additions, deletions, and corrections. *February — May 2018*

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- **Feedback and Closeout** — The Census Bureau will let participating governments know the results of the updates they submitted (*August — October 2019*) and finish the program with instructions on how to destroy or return confidential information reviewed during the program. *October 2019 — June 2020*

Q: Why is LUCA important for “hard-to-count” communities?

A: The Census Bureau strives to count all people living in the United State on Census Day,^{iv} but historically the census has missed people of color, urban and rural low-income households, and young children at disproportionately high rates. Immigrant, limited English proficient, and single parent households also are harder to count accurately.

The Master Address File (MAF) establishes the universe of living quarters (including group facilities, such as college dorms, prisons, and military barracks) for the census count. The accuracy of the MAF and related digital maps (the TIGER files^v, which put housing units in the correct location) is fundamental to an accurate census. The Census Bureau will not know that it has missed people who live in housing units that are not included on the MAF. In developing the address file and maps that guide census-taking, the Bureau can easily overlook commercial buildings that have been converted to residential units, people living in non-traditional housing (such as garages), illegally subdivided living quarters, and multiple households living in one structure. Local officials are better informed about their housing stock, especially in low-income neighborhoods and rural areas where difficult-to-spot or purposely “hidden” living quarters are more prevalent, and can help ensure the accuracy of the MAF and TIGER maps.

Q: How can civil rights advocates and other census stakeholders help ensure a successful 2020 Census LUCA Operation?

A: The LUCA program is voluntary, and only approximately 30 percent of eligible state, local, and tribal governments participated in 2010 Census LUCA activities.^{vi} Community organizations can encourage their civic leaders to accept the invitation to participate in the 2020 Census LUCA program and to allocate resources for thorough review and updating of address and map information for their area. Also, knowledgeable local leaders can help government entities identify hard-to-find, converted, and hidden housing units during the address review process, as long as they follow the strict confidentiality procedures governing the information the Census Bureau shares as part of the LUCA Operation.

ⁱ Article I, section 2, clause 3.

ⁱⁱ Title 13, United States Code (the Census Act).

ⁱⁱⁱ 13 U.S.C. §16, P.L. 103-430.

^{iv} April 1st of the year ending in “0.”

^v Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) database.

^{vi} 2010 Census Local Update of Census Addresses Assessment, U.S. Census Bureau, (Aug. 13, 2012), available at https://www.census.gov/2010census/pdf/2010_Census_LUCA_Assessment.pdf.

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